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PORTRAIT IN RED CRAYON
By Otto J. Schneider



BRUSH AND PENCIL

VOL. XII

APRIL, 1903

No. 1

ADAM EMORY ALBRIGHT, PAINTER OF CHILDREN

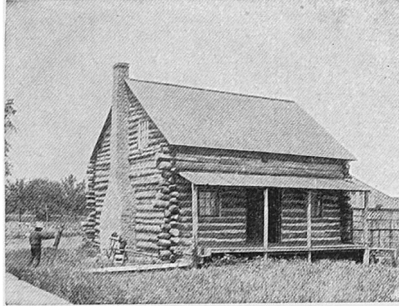
Some one has said with truth that "he who cherishes a kindly recollection of his own childhood, and maintains a lively interest in the child-life around him, must perforce be a poet, whatever be his calling, and however unsung be his phrases." The man in whom childhood and the love of children never die is of necessity close to nature, and is dominated by an imagination which is exuberant and savors of the spring of life. In a word, he is a man who has not been blinded by so-called culture to the beauty of homely scenes and lowly—and little—people.

Such a man is Adam Emory Albright, painter of children. Many an artist has made a specialty of some particular subject or line of subjects with policy aforethought, and has chosen themes with a view to patrons, as a merchant or a manufacturer selects a business with a view to success.

Albright has chosen his subjects from sheer love of them, sympathy with their trials and tribulations, appreciation of their pranks and whimsicalities. It may be said frankly, at the outset, that he has painted many a canvas with little consideration of the needs of the picture-vendor, but it may also be said that rarely has a canvas come from his studio that has not had about it such a measure of genuine child-life, and all that makes early years delightful, as to elicit the admiration of the spectator. The secret of the painter's hold



A. E. ALBRIGHT
From a Photograph



LOG STUDIO
Edison Park, Ill.

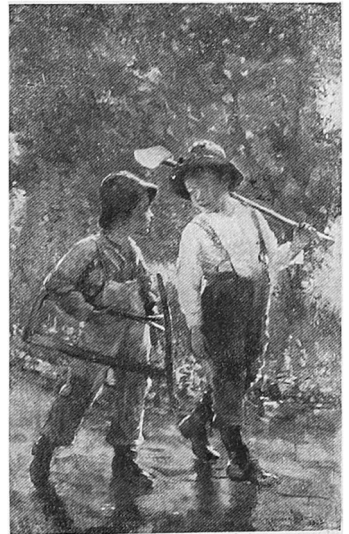
long ago in a dissolving rainbow-mirage of mist and sun, the old familiar 'wonderland of wayward childhood,' indeed, with all its 'dreamy gleam and gloom and bloom and balm.' For the pictures have souls—the pure, true, sunny souls of Youth and Spring."

Albright is an artist of no ordinary ability, despite the fact that for the most part his honors have yet to be won; and one can scarcely doubt that his specialty in pictorial art has been well chosen. Childhood as a theme never has been or will be exhausted; it will ever have a supreme interest for people normally, that is wholesomely, minded.

It is not necessary, moreover, for the limner of childish lineaments and the exploiter of childish traits to go to high life or olden times for models, to essay quaint or beautiful costumes, or to limit himself to the doll-like beauty of his little subjects. Child-life is essentially the same yesterday, today, and forever. The here and now are of more intrinsic interest than other times and climes as regards this class of subjects, and the portrayer of child-life cannot do better than to take the youngsters nearest at hand, study their peculiarities, and depict them in such a way that his canvases shall be a faithful record.

upon the public is not far to seek. A critic who has made a careful study of his work said recently:

"Mr. Albright's eminent success in painting country children is due to intimate sympathy and imagination, and when you look upon his work you are apt to recall not merely a group of happy children at play, as you have seen them with your grown-up eyes, but your own childhood and your childhood's chums; your own country home, lost



SONS OF TOIL
By A. E. Albright

This is exactly what Albright has done. He in a sense lives apart from the activities and novelties of metropolitan life. His studio is a log hut of generous proportions at Edison Park, Illinois, surrounded by green fields and meadows; and his warmest friends are the juvenile portion of the population around his rural retreat. Hence his special subjects, children, may be further specialized as country children, and these he has depicted in almost every conceivable pose, pastime, and occupation; and always, it should be said, with absolute fidelity to facts. He has never, so far as I know, been led to go outside of his own environment, and hence there is in all his work a sturdy realism to which the artist is ever loyal—a realism of which the charm would be broken were he guilty of idealizing his interesting subjects.



STUDY FOR COMING SHOWER
By A. E. Albright



MILKING TIME
By A. E. Albright

Albright's pictures of children, therefore, have a distinct peculiarity of their own. Kate Greenaway achieved fame by her pictures of children, relying largely upon grace of line and quaintness of conception; Walter Crane, in his many picture-books of children and for children, found popularity by sheer beauty of outline and fantastic conceits; Boutet de Monvel, charming as are his pictures of children, never freed himself from a certain conventional type of face, pose, and costume; J. G. Brown found his types in the alleys and on the curbstones, and he persistently keeps on painting a class—boot-blacks—who practically have long been out of existence. Albright, on the other hand, paints country children as he sees them at work and in play, and his canvases thus have a distinctive character and charm. In other words, he finds more inter-

est and worth in the commonly observed incidents of country children at work or at play than in the idealized creations by which other artists have become famous, or in the vanishing types which we of to-day largely have to take on trust.

A word of biography. Albright was born in Wisconsin in 1862, and apart from experimental efforts of his own, received his first



SNOWBALLS
By A. E. Albright

lessons in art at the Art Institute, Chicago. This experience he supplemented with a course of training in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Thence he went to Munich and Paris, from which art centers he returned to Chicago, opened a studio, and settled down in earnest to the life of a professional artist. From the day of his return to America he has been devoted, with a singleness of purpose rarely seen among American artists, to his adopted calling.

Other artists have divided their time—and as often through necessity as choice—between actual work as professional artists

and teaching, lecturing, writing, and various other money-making enterprises. Albright has never taught, never lectured, never written, never done anything except to live in a simple, retiring way, and devote himself with untiring zeal to the development of his own distinctive art. It was partly through his love of seclusion and of country experience, and partly from a wise policy of making revenue balance expenses, that he renounced the bustle and whirl of metropolitan life for the quiet retirement of his log studio at Edison Park. This retreat was lately visited and described by E. O. Laughlin, and I cannot do better than to quote here that writer's words:



A LUNCH FOR THE FARM-HANDS
By A. E. Albright



AMATEUR BASE-BALL PLAYERS
By A. E. Albright

“You journey by rail a half-hour from the heart of Chicago; you get off at a little red depot which stands just on the horizon line where city and country meet; then you inquire your way at the corner store,



ACROSS THE FARM
By A. E. Albright

where you will be duly instructed to follow your nose up the main street until you come to a windmill, turn with the windmill and proceed again until you come to a log cabin, and you will find that you have reached the studio of Mr. Albright, painter of pictures of child-life.

“The cabin studio is a rude structure in a way, and supremely comfortable—a very haven of rest and quiet, beyond reach of the last

echo of the city's turmoil, amid a landscape of field and wood, where the sun shines and the seasons come and go, and life may be lived simply and ideally. Oats grow almost in the dooryard, and pump-



YOUNGSTERS
By A. E. Albright

kins and corn, while untrained vines clamber here and there pendant with huge grandmother gourds—nature's own generous chalices, from which spring water may be quaffed as nectar. A flock of geese go skulking in awkward dignity toward the marsh, which becomes a pond at times; crows are caucusing in the cotton-woods; there are squirrels and rabbits peeking at you, although you do not see them, and all the while a flood of sunshine pours down from a smokeless azure sky.



THE COMING SHOWER
By A. E. Albright



FISHING
By A. E. Albright

"You enter the cabin only to learn that you have just turned your back on Mr. Albright's real studio, which is, in fact, all outdoors. However, it is within the cabin that the artist plans his work, and draws the first rough charcoal outline. The building contains but one room, which is of spacious size, and the walls of which are the native logs, unspoiled by paint or whitewash. The south end of the room is occupied by a quaint, old-fashioned fireplace, with crane and kettle, while the opposite end entire is taken up by a huge window to admit the necessary north light."

It is in the unique studio thus graphically described by Mr. Laughlin, and under conditions that suggest pioneer life in the backwoods, that Albright has done his best and his most distinctive work. It is no reflection on the painter's art to say that it savors of the conditions under which it has developed. His training in Chicago and Philadelphia is manifest in all he does, but there is not so much as a suggestion of the influence of Munich and Paris.

His return to America was a return to the commonplace facts of American country life. Mere prettiness, finish, scenes and themes hallowed by the devoted effort of generations of painters, were all renounced for the fresh young life of the village of his adoption.

Children were to him more interesting, more poetic, than the grown-up members of the community. He discarded professional models, which other painters have chosen on account of lines of beauty or picturesque characteristics, and trained his own three promising youngsters, all boys, to pose for him, supplementing these members of his own household with girls and boys of the neighborhood, according to the necessities of the work in hand.

It can readily be understood that he had a willing but somewhat intractable bevy of juvenile assistants. But that is what his art needed, and for the sake of acquiring something fresh, vital, and



THE RAFT
By A. E. Albright



THE COMPLETE ANGLER
By A. E. Albright

natural, Albright was willing to put up with the restlessness and the sportive proclivities of his little models. His canvases are thus transcripts from actual life. His figures are boys and girls just as you see them in any country town, clad roughly and in keeping with the season, with the usual country accompaniment of axes, bucksaws, rakes, hoes, scythes, milk-pails, fishing-rods, etc. The spectator who has ever been in the country recognizes the children and the accompaniments alike as the genuine article. There is a happy rural abandon in all the artist's pictures; and what is equally noteworthy, a certain character exemplified in face and figure which gives dignity and importance to his many and varied canvases.

Like most other painters, Albright has his own peculiar methods. Summer is his

favorite season, and early morning his preferred time for actual work. He costumes his little characters—manipulates the dress, perhaps, would be a better term, since usually he takes the children in whatever garb he finds them—and poses them according to the needs of the picture he has in mind. Then he outlines a sketch in charcoal as fully as the restless characters of his models will permit, thus recording the spirit of the scene and as many of the details as possible. This sketch he afterwards elaborates in his log studio, calling upon his little models for special sittings as the progress of the work requires.

One may here advert to certain peculiarities which many would care to see changed—possibly some would say corrected. He paints very broadly, with a scorn of elaboration and finish which many if not most lovers of oil-painting prize. He is, moreover, prone to duplicate his color scheme almost to the limit of monotony. The broad character of his methods thus tends to impart to his canvases the suggestion that they were designed as gallery or exhibition works, a suggestion that is emphasized by the fact that many of his canvases

are large in size, if not pretentious in composition. One would care to see the artist limit the size of his works and devote more care and labor to their finish.

The similarity of Albright's color schemes results doubtless from the fact that his palette is extremely simple. He uses but three colors, rose madder, cobalt blue, and chrome yellow. These three primary colors are rarely used in the pure state; but while their skillful combination imparts a multicolored brightness to the canvas, the narrow range of pigments precludes in actual practice many of the pleasing variations of effect which artists who use a wider range of colors produce.

Whether this broadness of treatment and limitation of palette are matters of individual preference or characteristics resulting from tentative efforts which time and practice will modify or overcome is, perhaps, unimportant. The main fact to be noted in Albright's art is, that it is distinctively individual, native, and possessed of the qualities that assure for the painter a permanent place in his country's art. As the pictorial exemplar of child-life in all its phases, he to-day stands alone. His specialty is one that is worthy of his abilities, and one which, it is safe enough to say, will find more and more popularity with the picture-loving public.

It has been deplored that many American students have returned from abroad so thoroughly imbued with the art—motives and principles—of Europe that their work has been European—and especially French—art with American trimmings. The strength and vigor of that which is purely American have thus been sacrificed at the shrine of what many are wont to term Old World dilettantism. Albright has never laid himself open to this charge, and any sins of immaturity or crudity of which he may have been guilty are more than recompensed for by the strong native quality of his work.



FIRST FLOWER OF SPRING

By A. E. Albright

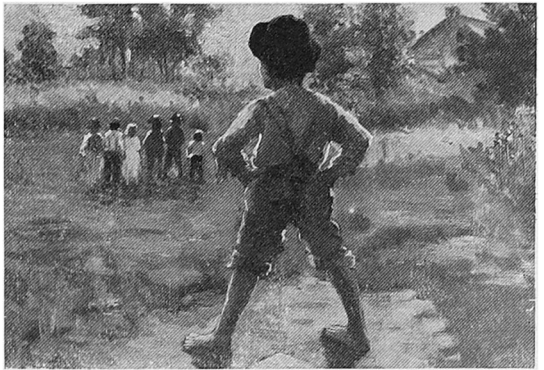


WHERE THE BULLHEADS BITE
By A. E. Albright

The accompanying illustrations will give a fair idea of the general character of Albright's pictures and of the manifold childish interests they are meant to exemplify. His canvases compass the whole range from sports to duties. His titles tell their

own story—"Sweethearts," "The Raft," "A Bite," "Nutting," "The Coming Shower," "Fighting Indians," "Prairie Gophers," "Me and Tige," "Where the Bullheads Bite," "When You and I were Young," "First Flower of Spring." These and scores of others that might be quoted show that there are few interests that appeal to children that have not also made their appeal through them to Albright. His works are *genre* pictures of a peculiar kind. They all tell a story, sing a song, point a moral, or preach a sermon, but always in terms of the little folk whom it requires a seer to understand and a sympathizing friend and admirer to exploit. They are, expressed in a word, pictures with a meaning.

To paint successfully pictures of this character presupposes a sincere purpose and a simple, happy disposition, both of which he has. It presupposes also infinite patience and pains, of both of which the artist has given evidence. He who has a predilection toward the stern or tragic side of nature and of life, who is in love with the artificial conditions im-



LION IN THE PATH
By A. E. Albright

posed by our social development, who prefers show to simplicity, or suggestions of some form or other of worldly wisdom to the frank, free expression of childish simplicity and innocence, or who prefers maturity with its fashions, follies, and foibles to what Robert Burns calls the "enviable early days, when dancing thoughtless pleasure's maze, to care, to guilt unknown," will, perhaps, not find in Albright's art the meaning and the content that he will find in the art of many another painter. To such, it is safe enough to say, the artist would not deign to cater. But as said before, to those who fondly recall early days, and have kept in their hearts a warm place for the little folk, Albright's work offers at least the elements of great art. The painter fully recognizes the fact that excellence necessitates untiring effort. He is industrious to a fault; and one may confidently predict that he will not disappoint the expectations that his friends and admirers entertain for his future.

HENRY E. WILLARD.



THE TWINS
By A. E. Albright